IN THE HIGH COURT OF GUJARAT AT AHMEDABAD

SPECIAL CIVIL APPLICATION No 3692 of 2004

For Approval and Signature:

HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE P.B.MAJMUDAR

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1. Whether Reporters of Local Papers may be allowed to see the judgements? : NO

2. To be referred to the Reporter or not? : NO

3. Whether Their Lordships wish to see the fair copy of the judgement? : NO

4. Whether this case involves a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution of India, 1950 of any Order made thereunder? : NO

5. Whether it is to be circulated to the concerned Magistrate/Magistrates,Judge/Judges,Tribunal/Tribunals? : NO

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AMU @ BADO BHANJI CHOTAI

Versus

THE DISTRICT MAGISTRATE

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Appearance:

1. Special Civil Application No. 3692 of 2004

MS BANNA S DUTTA for Petitioner No. 1

MS ARCHANA RAVAL, LD.AGP for Respondent No. 1-3

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CORAM : HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE P.B.MAJMUDAR

Date of decision: 12/08/2004

ORAL JUDGEMENT

1. By filing this petition, the petitioner-detenu, has challenged his detention order dated 21.2.2004, by which he is detained as a "bootlegger", under the provisions of the Gujarat Prevention of Anti-social Activities Act, 1985 ( "PASA", for short). Along with the order, the petitioner has also been served with the grounds of detention.

2. In the grounds of detention, there is a reference

about four criminal cases, which are registered against the petitioner under the Bombay Prohibition Act. It is alleged that, the petitioner is dealing in foreign liquor. After recording subjective satisfaction and after recording the statements of witnesses, whose names have not been disclosed to the petitioner under sec.9(2) of the PASA, the Authority has detained him as a "bootlegger" under PASA. The said detention order is challenged by the petitioner by way of this petition.

3. Learned advocate for the petitioner submitted that, four criminal cases are registered against the petitioner under the Prohibition Act. It is submitted that, from the aforesaid criminal cases, it cannot be said that the activity of the petitioner is such which is injurious to public health or that he has violated any public order by committing offence under the Bombay Prohibition Act.

4. Learned advocate for the petitioner further submitted that there is a delay in passing the detention order as the last case registered against the petitioner is of dated 28.6.2003, and as against that the detention order was passed on 21.2.2004. It is submitted that there is a delay of about eight months in passing the detention order from the last registered offence. It is further submitted that even after recording the so-called statements of witnesses, there is a delay of three months in passing the detention order. It is submitted that, in view of this long delay in passing the detention order from the last registered offence, the petitioner is required to be released on this ground.

5. In this connection, learned advocate for the petitioner has relied upon the decision of this Court in the case of Elesh Nandubhai Patel v. Commissioner of Police reported in 1997(1) GLH 381, wherein this Court has observed as under in paragraph 21:-

"para.21 In the instant case, the last registered case is of May 20, 1996. The petitioner detenu was granted anticipatory bail by the competent Court. He was also granted regular bail subsequently. The impugned order of detention has been passed on November 05, 1996, i.e. after a delay of 5 months and 15 days. It is of course true that the detaining authority relied on two incidents of 2nd October and 10th October, 1996, both unregistered cases. I have gone through the allegations. I fail to understand if the allegations are really of such a grievous nature,

why the cases have not been registered against the petitioner. There appears to be some substance in the contention of the petitioner that these two unregistered cases have been referred only with a view to cover up the gap or to give life to a stale case. This unexplained delay makes a ground of detention not proximate, vitiating the order of detention itself. If I am to buttress my findings, I would say the reference may be made to the decision of the Supreme Court in Anand Prakash v. State of U.P. reported in AIR 1990 SC 516 and Pradeep Nilkanth v. S.Ramamurthy reported in 1993(2) Suppl. SCC 61."

6. So far as the aforesaid contentions are concerned, no affidavit-in-reply is filed by the authority controverting the said contentions. In such type of cases, normally, reply is required to be filed, controverting the averments made in the petition; otherwise, it would be presumed that the averments made in the petition are correct because they stand uncontroverted. Moreover, the detaining authority has also not verified the statements of witnesses personally who have given the statements before the sponsoring authority. Learned AGP has submitted that, it is, no doubt, true that the detaining authority itself has not verified the statements of witnesses, but, according to her, it may not vitiate the detention order. In my view, since there is a considerable delay in passing the detention order from the last incident, and in view of the judgment of this Court referred to above, and since the averments are not controverted, and also on the ground of unexplained delay in passing the detention order, this petition is required to be allowed.

7. In view of what is stated above, this petition is allowed. The order of detention dated 21.2.2004 is quashed and set aside. The detenu, Amu @ Bado Bhanji Chotai, is ordered to be set at liberty forthwith, if he is not required in connection with any other case.

8. At this stage, learned advocate for the petitioner has voluntarily made a statement that the petitioner will not enter into Porbandar Taluka upto 31st October, 2004, unless he is required to appear in any other case for attending the court. Learned advocate for the petitioner has further submitted that she is making the statement after taking instructions from the detenu. The Concerned Police Officer may also monitor this aspect so that the statement of the petitioner can be effectively taken care of by the authorities. Rule is

made absolute.

( P.B. Majmudar, J. )

syed/